

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 141737

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OCLR, CVIS, NO, UR, US

SUBJECT: CREW LIST VISA PROBLEMS

REF: STATE 128031

1. SOVIET MARITIME ATTACHE DZHAVAD CAME IN AT HIS REQUEST
JUNE 16 TO PRESENT SOVIET RESPONSE TO US DEMARCHE (REFTEL).
US PARTICIPANTS IN MEETING SAME AS IN PARA 1 REFTEL.
DZHAVAD PRESENTED SOVIET RESPONSE IN FORM OF NON-PAPER IN
ENGLISH. TEXT FOLLOWS: QUOTE:

THE QUESTION OF SHORE LEAVE BY CREW-MEMBERS OF US AND USSR
VESSELS DURING VISITS IN SOVIET AND AMERICAN PORTS CORRES-
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PONDINGLY IS CONSIDERED IN CONNECTION WITH THE CONVERSA-
TION, WHICH HAS BEEN HELD HERE SHORTLY BEFORE.

IN OUR OPINION THE BEST DECISION WOULD BE IF BOTH SIDES
RECIPROCALLY DISAFFIRM THE EXISTING PROCEDURE OF ISSUING
VISAS FOR CREW-MEMBERS OF VESSELS BEFOREHAND IN ORDER TO
OBTAIN PERMISSION FOR SHORE LEAVE IN THE PORTS.

THE SOVIET COMPETENT AUTHORITIES WOULD BE READY TO FOLLOW THIS.

IN OUR OPINION THIS WOULD CONTRIBUTE TO FURTHER IMPROVEMENT OF MERCHANT SHIPPING BETWEEN TWO COUNTRIES AND WOULD CORRESPOND TO THE SPIRIT AND PROVISIONS OF THE HELSINKI FINAL ACT. UNQTE.

DZHAVAD EXPLAINED THAT THE SOVIET PROPOSAL WAS FOR SHIPS OF BOTH COUNTRIES TO APPLY FOR, AND RECEIVE CREW LIST VISAS UPON THEIR ARRIVAL AT THEIR FIRST PORT OF CALL. SOVIET SHIPS WOULD HAVE CREW LISTS CERTIFIED BY THE PORT CAPTAIN OF THE SOVIET PORT FROM WHICH THEY DEPARTED. CREW LISTS FOR US VESSELS COULD BE CERTIFIED BY OWNER OR AGENT. PORT IMMIGRATION OFFICIALS WOULD PROCESS THESE LISTS AND VALIDATE THEM AS CREW LIST VISAS. SUCH AN ARRANGEMENT WOULD ELIMINATE THE PRESENT PROBLEM OF SEVEN-DAY ADVANCE NOTIFICATION.

3. DZHAVAD STATED THAT BEFORE SIGNING OF MARITIME AGREEMENT IN 1972 CREWS OF US SHIPS WERE ABLE TO GO ASHORE IN SOVIET PORTS WITHOUT A VISA. US OFFICIALS POINTED OUT THAT FEW IF ANY US MERCHANT SHIPS CALLED AT SOVIET PORTS BEFORE THE AGREEMENT WAS SIGNED. DZHAVAD ALSO STATED THAT CREWS OF NON-US FOREIGN FLAG SHIPS ARE ALLOWED ASHORE WITHOUT VISAS. THE SOVIET UNION, HE SAID ONLY HAS CREW LIST VISA SYSTEM WITH US SHIPS BECAUSE OF US VISA REQUIREMENTS. HE STATED THAT THIRD-FLAG SHIPS' CREWS CAN GET ASHORE WITHIN CONFIDENTIAL

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TWO OR THREE HOURS AFTER ARRIVAL OF SHIP AT BERTH OR ANCHORAGE.

4. US SIDE RESPONDED THAT SOVIET PROPOSAL HAD BEEN MADE IN THE PAST AND HAD NOT BEEN ACCEPTABLE TO US SINCE OUR LAW REQUIRES THAT VISAS BE OBTAINED BEFORE ARRIVAL IN THE US. HOWEVER, IN EFFORT TO SOLVE CREW LIST VISA PROBLEM, US

AUTHORITIES WOULD STUDY IT AND DEPARTMENT WOULD GIVE HIM A RESPONSE.

5. DEPARTMENT OFFICERS ALSO RAISED WITH DZHAVAD PROBLEM OF PASSENGERS ON CARGO VESSELS. WE POINTED OUT THAT SINCE THE MEETING WITH DZHAVAD AND ZHUK WE HAD RECEIVED PAPERS FROM LYKES BROS. WHICH CONTAINED POSSIBLE SOLUTION TO PROBLEM. WE THEN GAVE DZHAVAD COPIES OF SOVIET EMBASSY LETTER DESCRIBED REFTTEL (PARA 7), STRESSING THAT IT ORIGINATED FROM THE SOVIET EMBASSY. WE SAID THAT THE IDEA PROPOSED BY THE SOVIET LETTER OF SUBSTITUTING LYKES FOR A TRAVEL AGENCY

WAS ONE WHICH COULD RESOLVE THE PASSENGER VISA PROBLEM.
DZHAVAD SAID HE WOULD PASS THIS ON TO HIS AUTHORITIES.

6. COMMENT. WE HAVE NO ILLUSIONS ABOUT THE MOTIVATION OF THE SOVIET PROPOSAL ON CREW VISAS, ESPECIALLY THE LINKAGE WITH CSCE. THE PROPOSAL PRESENTS OBVIOUS PROBLEMS AS IT HAS IN THE PAST. HOWEVER, WE WANT TO STUDY THE MATTER CAREFULLY TO SEE WHETHER WE CAN MAKE A CONSTRUCTIVE COUNTER-PROPOSAL, BEARING IN MIND THE VASTLY GREATER NUMBER OF SOVIET CALLS IN US PORTS COMPARED WITH US CALLS IN SOVIET PORTS.

7. ACTION REQUESTED. REQUEST EMBASSY MEET WITH MINISTRY OF MERCHANT MARINE TO CONFIRM THAT OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE PROPOSAL MADE BY DZHAVAD IS CORRECT. EMBASSY SHOULD TELL SOVIETS THAT WE ARE STUDYING THEIR PROPOSAL AND WILL PROVIDE AN ANSWER AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.
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8. EMBASSY SHOULD ALSO RAISE PASSENGER VISA ISSUE ALONG LINES OF PARA 4 ABOVE. EMBASSY SHOULD GIVE SOVIETS COPIES OF SOVIET EMBASSY LETTER WHICH DEPARTMENT RECEIVED FROM LYKES AND WHICH WAS POUCHED TO EMBASSY, POINTING OUT THAT THIS EARLIER SOVIET PROPOSAL IS AN ACCEPTABLE SOLUTION. EMBASSY SHOULD EMPHASIZE THAT WE WOULD LIKE TO RESOLVE THIS PROBLEM SOON. IF IT DEEMS USEFUL, EMBASSY MAY WISH TO REQUEST THAT COMPETENT SOVIET IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL BE PRESENT AT MEETING, NOTING SOTO'S PARTICIPATION IN WASHINGTON DISCUSSIONS.

9. DEPARTMENT WOULD LIKE ALSO TO HAVE BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON DZHAVAD'S STATEMENTS IN PARA 3 ABOVE CONCERNING SHORE LEAVE FOR THIRD-COUNTRY SEAMEN IN SOVIET PORTS. REQUEST EMBASSY QUERY FRIENDLY EMBASSIES WHICH HAVE SHIPS CALLING AT SOVIET PORTS CONCERNING SOVIET SHORE LEAVE REGULATIONS: HOW LIBERAL ARE THEY, HOW QUICKLY DO THEIR SEAMEN GET ASHORE, ARE REGULATIONS UNIFORMLY APPLIED, DO THEY APPLY BOTH TO SHIPS AT BERTH AND AT ANCHOR? REQUEST EMBASSY ALSO QUERY THESE EMBASSIES CONCERNING THEIR OWN GOVERNMENTS' POLICIES TOWARD SHORE LEAVE FOR SOVIET MERCHANT SEAMEN. VANCE

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